SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Sir, in part (b), the hon. Minister has mentioned this. "This train services announced in the Railway Budget are introduced during the course of the ensuring financial year." I have seen from his answer that out of 57 trains, 50 trains have been introduced, and seven are yet to be introduced. Out of these seven, Ajmer-Ranchi Garib Nawaj Express, on second number, will be introduced by 14.3.2007. But what about other trains. I would like to know whether they would be introduced within the financial year. If not, what is the target time for the rest of the trains to be introduced? Specially, I want to know about the Kumarghat-Agartala train. When will it be introduced?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, Out of seven, we may be able to put three of them inoperation before 31.3.2007. Normally, Sir, the trains announced in the Budget are to be introduced before the close of the financial year. So, out of seven, three will be introduced. The Hon. Member wanted to know, specially, about the Agartala - Kumarghat train. From Kumarghat - Manu, we are already operating on 20 kilometres . But Manu-Agartala is a tunnel section where the profile of the rock is very difficult. The leading and benching and further processing which we do there in tunnel is taking time. So, perhaps, both with the availability of resources and focussed application of work there, we may be able to achieve it by 31.12.2007.

Vigilance Committees for monitoring of FPSs

*163. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any information regarding the formation of Vigilance Committees at State/UTs, district and block levels for implementation and monitoring of the functioning of Fair Price Shops; and

(b) if so, the status of formation of these Committees at all levels?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Central Government has been requesting the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations to activate Vigilance

Committees and re-constitute them, if not done already, by associating members from amongst the card holders as well as people's representatives. In the Model Citizens' Charter, constitution of Vigilance Committees by State Governments at the level of Panchayat, Ward, Taluk, District and States/Union Territories have already been emphasized. In the guidelines issued in June, 1999 for the involvement of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the implementation of Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS), it has been suggested that the Gram Panchayats, Gram Sabhas should be encouraged to form Fair Price Shop (FPS) Committees. The main functions of Vigilance Committees are to ensure smooth functioning of Public Distribution System (PDS) and redressal of problems related with it. The Vigilance Committees are at present functioning at FPS level, Block/Mandal/Taluk Level, District Level and State Level in most of the States/Union Territories. As per the information received from States/UTs, the status of constitution of Vigilance Committees in the States/Union Territories is Annexed.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, this question is actually related to the strengthening of the Public Distribution System. Particularly, at the time of skyrocketing prices of essential food commodities, one of the ways to protect the poor from the effect of these high prices is to strengthen the PDS; and to strengthen the PDS, we have to strengthen the different components of the PDS, including the FCI. And, to strengthen the FCI, Sir, we have to get rid of the cancer of corruption. Now, Sir, looking at the removal of corruption as a means to strengthen the FCI -- some people say because the FCI is corrupt, finish the FCI; that is not my point at all-- the role of the Central and State Governments to tackle corruption is very, very crucial. One is the State Vigilance Committees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come to your question.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, I am just coming to the question. One is the State Vigilance Committees; some details have been given by the Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Come to your question.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Along with that, Sir, there is also a Central Vigilance Committee under the FCI. Now, according to a CAG Report, Performance Audit on Management of Foodgrains, it is said that the cases

of misappropriation, corruption, shortages, losses due to negligence or breach of contract were reported to the Vigilance Sections along with investigation reports. As on 31st December, 2005, Sir, there were 552 major and 1593 minor cases which were pending for the last three years. This is in 2005. For the last one year, I want to know from the hon. Minister, what action has been taken against those who are involved in the curruption cases Has anybody been arrested? Has anybody been jailed? Has any action been taken? And since December, 2005 to the present, what are the new cases of corruption which have come to light, and what has the Government done to arrest the people who are involved in it?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, there seems to be some misunderstanding. Now, I do not know whetehr it is my misunderstanding or the hon. Member's misunderstanding. The question is very specific. The question is, whether Government have any information regarding the formation of Vigilance Committees at the State levels, district levels and block levels for implementation and monitoring of the functioning of Fair Price Shops. But the hon. Member has mentioned about the FCI. The FCI stands for the Food Corporation of India.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, I am quite aware what the FCI is, and I am also quite aware, Sir, that the FCI...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Brindaji, please take your seat. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please take your seat. Let him finish.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, why I am saying this is because this question is restricted to Fair Price Shops and the monitoring and supervision of the Fair Price Shops by the Vigilance Committees. Sir, in my reply, I have mentioned in how many States, in how many districts and in how many blocks, these Committees have already been appointed. The question comes about the action. The question is, after these various studies, what type of action has been taken? I am ready to give the information about the action that has been taken against those Fair Price Shops, where there is corruption or diversion of foodgrains. The total number of shops in this country is 4,89,000. Out of 4.89,000, in the year 2005-06, 16,035 shops have been suspended either because of diversion of food or corruption, etc. In the year 2006-07, till last month, 2634 shops have been suspended. The number of raids which are conducted on these shops in 2005-06, 66,825.

So, something is happening there. The hon. Member has asked about the FCI. I would need a separate notice for that, but I have no hesitation in providing information about the FCI.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon, Minister would agree that suspension is no punishment.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, after suspension there is prosecution. The matter goes to the court and, ultimately, the court gives a final decision.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: In any case, I shall go by what the hon. Minister says. But everybody knows that there are two areas of leakage. One is from the FCI to the FPS. Therefore, if the Minister neither wants to accept nor deal with that avenue of leakage, it is up to him; I an not going to press the point. But, certainly, that is a very important point of leakage which also leads to further corruption and that was my point. My point was very specifically related to the FCI Vigilance Division.

My second supplementary is about an Area Officers Scheme which is directly under the Ministry, which is also linked to spot-checks of the fair price shops. So, this is the responsibility of the Central Government. I just want to say that, according to the CAG, as against 280 visits...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you wish to have the reply to your question?

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, I would be finishing in a second

As against 280 visits required under the scheme, the Area Office under the Central Ministry had conducted only ten visits, that is. four per cent of what they should have done is 2004-05. Now, my question is: what are the measures being taken by the Central Ministry under the hon. Minister to ensure that the Area Officers Scheme, which was set up in 2000, is going to be properly implemented so as to stem corruption. I would like to emphasize this, Sir, because in the name of corruption, there are lobbies which want to completely eliminate the FCI altogether. So, on the one hand, you don't take measures to strengthen the FCI to remove corruption and, on the other, you say because there is corruption, we want to finish the FCI and give it to private traders. Therefore, this question of the Government taking on a strong role to control corruption is very much linked to the PDS.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Under clause 8 and clause 9 of the Public Distribution System Order, 2001, the total number of inspections conducted by the States and the Union Territories, in the year 2005-06 was 4,48,466. This is as per the report that I have got. Here, I think the hon. Member is referring to the FCI raids and their department. I have not got that information with me because the question that has been raised here is about fair-price shops. I have no hesitation in providing that information too. But there has to be a separate question.

*164 [The questioner (Shri Abu Asim Azmi) was absent for answer vide page 32]

Private hospitals

*165. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of private hospitals, clinics and nursing homes as on 31st December, 2006; and

(b) whether Government would ensure that the existing hospitals, clinics and nursing homes operated by private players maintain minimum standards?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The data regarding number of private hospitals, clinics and nursing homes is not maintained centrally by the Government of India. Health is a State subject. About ten States have already enacted legislation for the registration and or regulation of private hospitals and nursing homes. Enactment of a central legislation for regulation of clinical establishments including maintenance of minimum standards is a priority area of this Government.

SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Sir, the Central Government has announced the National Health Policy in 2002. I would like to know whether the Policy has been formally implemented in all cases and if there has been any monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Policy.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS: Sir, even though this question does not relate to the question which has been asked here, I would like to say that